

273 the greater part of the following day until the effects are worn off.⁴

There is tolerance of drinking and of behavior while under the influence of alcohol—with the exceptions to be discussed below. This nonchalance extends to children and young people. When an elder and highly respected friend or neighbor, perhaps their own grandfather, is drunk, they laugh indulgently at him, passing off his behavior as foolish because he is drunk.

[576] The custom of drink exchange (*kampai*) certainly does not keep drinking to a minimum. Drink exchange is perpetual at parties. A small cup of sake is offered to a friend. He drinks, gives the cup back to his friend who holds it while the other refills the cup. The exchange goes on again. Often three or four men are involved in this reciprocity.

[272] Drinking, like an aperitif or cocktail before a meal, is not common. Sake may be drunk with or after the meal. Often it is served along with tea. Throughout the evening the two may be drunk alternatively. In this case, the tea is served first. Unless there are special occasions, there is very little day time drinking.

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562 In this drinking, the Okinawan woman has no part. There are a few minor exceptions. But in all the villages these exceptions were older or very elderly women. The young wife or girl in rural Okinawan villages simply does not drink. Furthermore, she seems to have no desire to. Occasionally a woman in her late forties or early fifties takes a few sips. In the southern villages, an old woman may drink a small amount with a little added sugar at a celebration. In Matsuda, shortly before New Years it is customary to give a party at village expense to all people in the village over 70 years of age. On this occasion, both the old men and old women are liberally supplied with and liberally drink the sake.

[888] These distinctions in drinking between the sexes, in my opinion, are closely tied in with the responsibilities of men and women, as they have grown up historically under the family system. The distinctions certainly cannot be explained in terms of contemporary attitudes. If drinking is an outlet for the tensions of the men, a way of relieving the boredom and monotony of every day life, how can one explain the

[154] There is little real violence or fighting, but there may be noisy quarrels and some shoving about. Some wild men become very quarrelsome. The only instance of violence I observed was the case of a young man about 25 who drank quite a lot, became angry with some girls in the Young Women's Association for not doing chores he thought they were responsible for. He slapped one severely. The following day he was very remorseful. His mother went to the girl's house and personally apologized for the boy's behavior.

absence of need of a similar release from the boring and monotonous life of the women. Yet I noticed little in the behavior of village women to indicate they were overwhelmed by monotony or bored with life, though perhaps longer residence in the villages would have proved this observation false. Might one say that the culture does not fulfill its promise to the men, even though they are favored and catered to and that the drinking is the result of this disappointment? This neglects the fact that drinking is old in the culture and is almost always done in the company of others. If personal frustration and disappointment were the cause, one might expect more compulsive and solitary drinking and more alcoholism.

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The sources of this distinction between the drinking men and the abstemious women, I think, lie in the values held by the culture. In the first place, sake drinking is age old in Japan, and probably in Okinawa as well. Drinking sake is associated with ceremonies, such as marriage, with religious observances, with social and public life. The public life of an official, a shopkeeper or business man, a farmer, a fisherman is not divorced from entertainment. Men have an outside life. In their dealings with other men, they are accustomed to drinking. Women do not have this outside life. They have inside duties of which the care of the children and of the house are the most important. Historically, the source of the abstemiousness of the women may be the obligations of being a mother, to be ready at all times to care and provide for or nurse her children, obligations considered incompatible with drinking. Women are expected to be polite, refined, and quiet. These ideals may be difficult to maintain in drinking.

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At times a husband and wife may participate in social gatherings as a couple. These gatherings may either be (1) an informal, often casual, event when guests drop in and spend part of the evening, and (2) the formal affairs, such as a marriage, a birthday celebration, a holiday, an extended family reunion, or the observance of a death anniversary. On these occasions, the men occupy the first room, the women the second. The entertainment and conversations of the evening are for the most part governed by this segregation.

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Though women are tolerant of drinking, domestic difficulties are often caused by the drinking of the men. Frequent drinking with its noise and late hours may result in family quarrels (fufukanka). Quarrels involving the wife and the husband's female relatives, especially the mother, are said to be uncommon. In the southern villages, the war did away with one cause of family quarrels. Men no longer go to the geisha quarter. There are naturally tensions coming out of individual antagonisms and dissatisfactions: the husband's mother who ignores her grandchild because she dislikes her daughter-in-law, pressure on a woman to produce children to satisfy the pride of the husband and of the grandparents, and failure to bear children, which usually leads to divorce initiated by the husband. Divorces, in these rural villages, were found to be uncommon.

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5 No reliable statistics could be found. These remarks and those in the next paragraph are based on personal observation, impressions and conversations.

Since

621 several finance groups are formed simultaneously in the village, and
452 an individual may belong to more than one, this system can create
474 more problems for the community than it helps to redress. Village
leaders therefore think that the cooperative could take over the loan
functions at low interest rates more effectively.

433 Concern about improving village economy is genuine and foremost.
621 Since the whole island has common economic problems, many sug-
[654] gestions for developing sound village economy originate from the cen-
tral government. There are many associations and movements which
all aim at the same result. Their number is staggering and bewildering
to the outsider. In Taira, concern for improvement of conditions is a
program of the Women's Association and the Home Improvement
Group, associations who try to introduce such changes as better stoves,
making of bean paste by villagers, and saving during feasts. There is
also an Agricultural Promotion Association which is concerned with
improvement of agricultural practices, promotion of cash crops, and
[474] reduction of forest work. All these organizations, along with the co-
operative and the village government, work together. An individual
may be a member of several. Persons with enough knowledge and ex-
perience to assume responsible positions are limited in number, and
the same persons appear as leaders in various groups. This puts a
heavy burden on them, since few days pass during which their at-
tendance after work is not required at one meeting or another.

54 Taira assumed a leading position in the township in improving
571 agricultural and general economy, especially by promoting sugar de-
velopment, pineapple growing, and tea raising in recent years. Mean-
while, low income and general poverty are a constant concern to every-
body but do not seem to result in constant anxiety. Security, as will be
pointed out in other contexts, is provided by being a member of the
kinship group and, in the wider sense, of the village as a whole. This
helps to share burdens and thus reduce their weight.



Chapter 8

Religion

771 The religious beliefs of people in Taira and their ritual practices recognize the existence of two different sources of supernatural forces.
177 The old Okinawan religion, which is still practiced by many persons
[776] in the village, centers on beliefs in a host of nonhuman spirits that inhabit certain localities. A historically more recent Confucian-Bhuddist influence from China and Japan has added to these beliefs
[769] the veneration of ancestors who, in their divine state after death, control many activities of the living. Under the influence of these two
[782] forces, the animistic and the ancestral, life must be conducted in such
[784] a way that both remain appeased at all times by proper worship and performance of ritual as well as by avoidance of actions which might offend these supernatural forces.

771 Even though many younger people laugh away the adherence to
● [154] beliefs, especially in animistic deities, there is much evidence that the life of almost all people is controlled by fears, anxieties, and desires for appeasement stemming from these religious beliefs. Although historically the animistic and ancestral religious beliefs were separate, they are synchronized at present so that it is not always possible to make a clear distinction between each system (Lebra: 1958).

776 The supernatural beings of nature live all around the village. There are mountain deities, deities of the sea, of the well, of trees, and other places. Any localities connected with productive activities, such as the store, the sugar mill, the sugar press, and the village truck, have their
[372] own deities. There is also the Deity of Fire, associated with the hearth and the house. He is represented in three hearth stones found in most simple kitchens. Three upright small stones, resembling the hearth stones, are the divine symbols in the village shrine where all these supernatural beings are worshipped.

[782] The supernatural beings living in and around the village appear

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women chant. The tempo becomes more and more frenzied, and at a certain moment a bell rings. Nobody knows who rings it, and no amount of questioning elicited any information other than that this was done by divine action. 796
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Ancestral worship is equally important in the life of Taira people. Each house of an oldest son has a shelf with a shrine in the main living room. On this shelf the family keeps the ancestral tablets, each representing a deceased ancestor of a recent period. The tablets for whole family lines are kept on the shelves of the main houses. Through this system a family maintains continuity between the living and the dead. Although a deceased person is believed to become a buddha or a god who ascends to heaven, his presence is still felt by the living relatives. If they fail to make the required offerings on the first and fifteenth day of each lunar month, or otherwise neglect religious duties toward the ancestor, misfortune may come to the family. At the same time, the worship of common ancestors holds branches of the larger kin groups together. 769
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No village adult died during our stay, but the funeral practices for adults described by Glacken (1955) and Pitts et al. (1955) for other villages in Okinawa are similar. Seven years is the age limit for a child burial, which is simple and does not require attendance of people other than immediate relatives and perhaps one or two neighbors.* During the study an 8-year-old boy died from an illness and was given a full funeral, which is similar to that of adults. 764
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The funeral must take place at the first outgoing tide after the body has been prepared and dressed. Accompanied by family, residents of the ward, and mourners from other parts of the village whose number depends on the prominence of the dead, the body is carried on a simple, open litter to the tomb area just west of the central village (see map 2). Women feel free to show their emotions, while men remain outwardly calm. Until decomposition takes place, the body remains in a tomb used by the whole village for temporary entombment. Like other village ceremonies, funerals are less elaborate now than they once were, perhaps to the relief of all concerned, since death is highly anxiety provoking, and nobody feels comfortable during the prayers and the ritual farewell to the corpse at the tomb. The participants receive a cup of sake before leaving the tomb area to cleanse them of the pollution of death. Some people still prefer to return to the village by a different route so that the spirit of the dead person will be fooled and unable to follow. 764
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* The reason for this is possibly that the younger child has not yet fulfilled his filial obligations.

later told the story to Lebra in the child's presence with a good deal of rel- 86
ish, while the boy merely looked sheepish and said nothing.

Punishment may be by either parent or by a grandparent. Other relatives may scold. I once observed a four-year-old being scolded long and shrilly by her father's sister. I asked why the mother, who was just inside the house, did not do the scolding and I was told that the child would not mind her mother and so the aunt had had to step in. I was also given the impression that the child's mother would hardly have dared defend her. It seems likely that mothers and grandmothers punish most frequently but that fathers, though they punish less frequently, are more severe; they are certainly more feared. It is said that after a child is punished it is usually comforted by the adult who punished it. There are, of course, individual differences. One man at Nanahan was known to be particularly harsh with his children. Pitts observed him on one occasion chasing one of his children around the village with a strap.

Okinawan adults, especially women, frequently tease children. On two 85
occasions I saw a particularly cocky little boy of three or four teased in a deliberate attempt to make him angry or to make him cry. On the first occasion one of his aunts, his mother's oldest sister, struck the boy's baby sister, pretending to hurt her. He was very fond of the baby and the object of the teasing seemed to be to arouse his sympathy to the point where he would have showed his emotions, at which point, I assume, the crowd of women would have laughed. This time the teasing was unsuccessful. On the second occasion his mother and her sisters told him first that I was going to take him away, then that I was going to take his little sister away, and produced other variations on this theme. After several minutes of this he went grimly over to his mother and began hitting her with his fists. The women all regarded this as great sport. No effort was made to stop him from hitting his mother. This sort of teasing seems to have amusement as its main object, but probably has other functions as well. It may possibly provide women a necessary outlet for feelings of hostility, especially against males. But it may also have the more important functions of producing in the child the desirable emotional responses---sympathy for the little sister, fear of losing her, fear of being separated from home---while at the same time conditioning the child to inhibit the expression of these emotions. [154] [867] [152]

On another occasion I saw the mother of the children just mentioned hold out a lighted match in front of the baby until the baby, after regarding it in wonderment, reached out and was burned. The women watched expectantly and laughed when the baby cried, but in this case the act seemed more like deliberate instruction in the properties of fire than merely teasing. But as in teasing, the discomfort to the child is something not to be avoided but rather to be enjoyed. And as in teasing, the child learns to associate laughter with his own discomfort, or perhaps with his expression of his discomfort. He may thereby learn to avoid being laughed at because it is associated with discomfort, and to avoid the expression of discomfort because it brings laughter. [861] [155]